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# **How Elements of the Inner City Environment can be Developed to Promote Liveability**

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment  
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at  
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by  
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Abstract of a dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
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## **How Elements of the Inner City can be Developed to Promote Liveability**

by  
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New Zealand is one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world with well over 87 per cent of us living in 138 recognised urban centres, yet the number of people residing in inner city areas is proportionally very low. Householders have been exercising their preference for suburban or rural areas by opting for low density suburban environments. It is widely agreed that productivity and sustainability increase when people aggregate in the inner city, however there is a perceived trade-off between the density and liveability of an area. Achieving liveability in the inner city is concerned with reducing the pressures which emerge from higher population densities. Promoting inclusive societies, revitalising underutilised cityscapes, ensuring accessibility and fostering sense of place, are all elements essential to achieving liveable communities. The rebuild following the 2010 and 2011 Canterbury earthquakes provides Christchurch with an opportunity to shape a more environmentally sustainable, economically vibrant and liveable city. This research involves undertaking a case study of current inner city liveability measures and those provided for through the rebuild. A cross-case analysis with two of the world's most liveable cities, Melbourne and Vancouver, exposes Christchurch's potential shortcomings and reveals practical measures the city could implement in order to promote liveability.

**Keywords:** liveability, urban planning, density, inner city, community, development, Christchurch, Melbourne, Vancouver

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## **1. Introduction**

Towns and cities are dynamic; they are constantly evolving. A greater proportion of individuals are living and working in the city than we have seen before, while the proportion of those living and working in the inner city has significantly reduced (Howley, Redmond & Scott, 2009). Achieving liveability in the inner city is concerned with much more than physical form. Promoting inclusive societies, revitalising underutilised cityscapes, ensuring accessibility and fostering sense of place on an ongoing basis, are all elements essential to attaining liveability.

Planning for liveability involves identifying what works for humans at experiential and phenomenological levels. It is widely agreed that to achieve sustainability in an urban context, growth must be confined to the inner city and urban sprawl limited (Howley, Redmond & Scott, 2009). However, there is a perceived trade-off between the density and liveability of an area. Urban planning based on the virtues of the compact city is seen by individuals as too costly to their quality of life (Howley, Redmond & Scott, 2009). Findings suggest residential density is not the source of dissatisfaction but rather associated factors; noise, environmental degradation and poor access to facilities are a few of the consequences of poorly planned density increasing policies (Howley, Redmond & Scott, 2009).

New Zealand is one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world with well over 87 per cent of us living in 138 recognised urban centres (MfE, 2012), however the number of us residing in inner city areas is proportionally very low. Householders have been exercising their preference for suburban or rural areas by opting for these lower density environments. This suggests that those factors associated with higher density, inner city living are working against the desirability of our urban centres. The current planning and management of the inner city imparts the need to reconcile environmental, economic, along with social sustainability considerations (Howley, Redmond & Scott, 2009). To achieve liveability, urban planners must ensure sustainable management provisions do not contravene the quality of life for residents (Howley, Redmond & Scott, 2009).

### **1.1. Overall Research Aim**

The aim of this research is to compare and contrast elements of liveability and explore practical measures of implementation relevant to inner city planning in Christchurch.

The key question guiding the research is:

How can elements of the inner city environment be developed to promote liveability?

### **1.2. Objectives and Methods**

The main objective of my research will be to define the concept of liveability as it applies in the urban context and develop a list of elements of liveability.

Following this, I will determine what practical measures may be implemented to achieve each of the elements of liveability. My research method for this objective will be a policy analysis of cities committed to employing steps toward improving liveability and currently recognised for the liveability of their inner city areas. These practical measures will be narrowed down from those provided for in current plans, strategies and programmes developed by local authorities.

Finally, I will undertake a case study of current inner city liveability measures and those provided for through the rebuild in Christchurch City. Again, I will undertake a policy analysis of plans, strategies and programmes as my research method. Where possible, I will recommend practical measures that may be implemented, during future development, to increase the liveability of the inner city.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. Urban Development in New Zealand**

We have seen a global trend toward increasing urbanisation. The world's urban population surpassed the rural in 2009. However New Zealand has seen growth towards



towns and cities since settlement first occurred. The urban population in New Zealand overtook the rural in 1911. Throughout this period of urbanisation, New Zealand has sustained the notion of being a rural paradise with a spacious quality of life which has led to suburban development and immigration (DIA, 2008). Our urban centres are small in comparison to the land coverage of agriculture, forestry, native forest and other public conservation land. Farming, forestry and fishing were historically, and continue to be, the sources of our primary exports (DIA, 2008).

Urban settlement in New Zealand occurred recently relative to settlement abroad. The initial Maori settlement sites were positioned to be easily defensible and proximate to natural food source. New Zealand towns were originally designed to provide the creature comforts that the industrial cities of Britain could not. Small towns and readily available land allowed for detached suburban residences with a large section (MfE, 2005). Urban centres were largely given grid street patterns by early town planners and the suburbs were expanded depending on the development of our urban transport systems. The patterns of these pioneering urban areas and colonial pattern of urban settlement are of fundamental value to urban planning and design (DIA, 2008).

The dramatic rise in car ownership and use between 1925 and 1930 had a pronounced effect on the patterns of urban life. Construction of the necessary arterial roads to accommodate private vehicles ensued. Traffic congestion concerns saw car-oriented development dominate with the 1955 Auckland Master Transportation Plan, the 1959 opening of the Harbour Bridge and the more recent urban motorway system (DIA, 2008). This increase in personal mobility saw a rise in urban sprawl resulting in extensive, low-density housing on the suburban edges of cities with inner areas remaining a grid pattern of mainly commercial enterprises. Community services and amenities designed to cater for the individual suburb became less viable and have given way to large scale facilities. The suburbs have become dedicated to largely residential land use. As suburban sprawl has increased, so have the alternatives to this trend. Intensive forms of central city living, such as apartments, town houses and infill housing, have gained popularity in recent decades (DIA, 2008; Vallance, Perkins & Moore, 2005). The consequent growth problems

urban planners are working to ameliorate include how to effectively intensify our inner suburbs and how to design liveable residences in the inner city (MfE, 2005).

Urban planning has, by and large, been assigned to local government over the past 25 years. Key legislation such as the Local Government Act 2002 and the Resource Management Act 1991 delegated authority over shaping the patterns of development of our towns and cities to the local level. “Central government’s own land ownership and development role has generally been delegated to individual departments and operating arms” (DIA, 2008).

## **2.2. Towards Sustainability**

The idea of sustainable development grew from numerous environmental movements in earlier decades but was defined in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission, 1987) as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. This contributed to the understanding that sustainable development encompasses a number of areas and highlights sustainability as the idea of environmental, economic and social progress and equity, all within the limits of the world’s natural resources (Howarth, Norgaard & Sneddon, 2006).

The New Zealand government has enacted legislation to enshrine sustainability principles in law, notably the 1991 Resource Management Act. It was a landmark piece of legislation, being the first to adopt the principle of sustainability. In the period following the 1992 Earth Summit, New Zealand had the opportunity to become a leading light on sustainable development. However, current trends in consumption of energy and natural resources, production of waste, urban growth, biodiversity losses and biosecurity threats, land-use and water issues in rural and urban areas, and air quality in urban areas, are all signs that New Zealand is not functioning in a sustainable manner (PCE, 2002). Successive governments have largely ignored the 1992 Agenda 21 commitments and have not provided the necessary leadership.

Other sectors, including individual local authorities, business organisations, and community groups have made progress with their own initiatives. They have tried to incorporate sustainable development principles into their policies and activities, and have encouraged others to do likewise. These local initiatives have made the biggest contribution to awareness of sustainable development in New Zealand (PCE, 2002).

### **2.3. Urban Planning**

Internationally urban planning is usually concerned not only with the built form and aesthetic value but also the economic, environmental, social and cultural ramifications of the urban form (MfE, 2005). The scope of urban planning can range from a city, to a public space, to a single building and planners work to optimise the relationships between these elements. Urban planners are concerned with the process of decision making through to the outcomes of design, the ways people use the cities and whether it works for them. A proactive approach to urban planning can avoid some of the common issues of the inner city such as “traffic congestion, unsustainable energy use, overloaded urban infrastructure, a lack of distinctive identity, social isolation, and reduced physical activity” (MfE, 2005). Research has found that quality urban planning lessens long term costs, such as operating and maintenance, while initial development costs remain about the same (MfE, 2005).

In New Zealand the last two decades of the Twentieth Century has seen urban planning retreat to ensuring that proper planning process is followed over and above formulating best urban planning approaches (Montgomery, 2010). Planning literature from the 1980s into the new millennium emphasised the protocols of effects-based management under the Resource Management Act 1991, neglecting the development of approaches to good urban planning. This is not to go as far as to say that urban planning for liveability was abandoned completely, however, approaches developed under contradictory rubrics failed to produce a cohesive approach to sustainable planning, in an urban setting or otherwise (Montgomery, 2010).

## **2.4. The Role of Cities**

A large number of people rely on the functioning of a city for their livelihood and their daily needs. The city itself becomes a deciding factor in whether their full potential is reached. Cities are dynamic; the sustainable cities of today have a notably different make-up to the economically successful cities of the past. Historically, the role of these urban centres was to provide high returns from large scale production that was based close to consumers (DIA, 2008). As the prominence of manufacturing in developed countries and the cost of transportation have decreased, cities are becoming hubs for new economic activity. The transportation of goods has given way to the connection of people and the transportation of their ideas. Cities require skilled workers and investment in knowledge generation to fulfil this new role of global connectedness (DIA, 2008).

Productivity has been proven to increase when people aggregate densely in cities. However these gains are dependent on the quality of density (DIA, 2008). Pressures can emerge from higher population densities such as “higher costs of living, unaffordable housing, higher costs of labour, pressure on infrastructure, congestion, pollution, crime and other social problems” (DIA, 2008), which encourage dispersion. In order to create liveability under this new role, cities must be able to provide residents with a good quality of life and enable them to reach their potential, while minimising the pressures caused by increasing density.

## **2.5. The NZ Urban Design Protocol**

As part of the Government’s Sustainable Development Programme of Action and Urban Affairs portfolio, the Ministry for the Environment (MfE) formed the New Zealand Urban Design Protocol. As stated on the Ministry for the Environment website, this protocol has been developed in order to “provide a platform to make New Zealand towns and cities more successful through quality urban design” (2012). The signatories who entered into this voluntary agreement, of which Christchurch City Council is one, have committed to

developing a programme of actions consistent with the Protocol for creating quality urban design (MfE, 2005). The New Zealand Urban Design Protocol is a key deliverable of the 'Sustainable Cities' action area.

The Urban Design Protocol identifies seven indicators of quality urban design that they have labelled "essential design qualities" required for, among other aspects of sustainability, social and cultural life to thrive. These are: context, character, choice, connections, creativity, custodianship and collaboration (MfE, 2005). Although formulated and launched a number of years ago now, the "7C's" remain relevant and is not part of the Protocol content currently under review. They are based on "sound urban design principles recognised and demonstrated throughout the world" (MfE, 2005). The response to these indicators has been an acknowledgement of their merits and some unease at the lack of "content that operationalises these principles" (Montgomery, 2010). Inadequate research conducted on how New Zealand cities perform against social and environmental indicators, along with a change of government may have induced such a response.

### **3. Elements of Liveability**

Liveability is becoming increasingly recognised but still lacks cohesion as to what this constitutes (Bramley et al, 2006). A commonly used definition for liveability comes from Polèse and Stren, who interpret this concept as "development (and/or growth) that is compatible with harmonious evolution of civil society, fostering an environmental conducive to the compatible cohabitation of culturally and socially diverse groups while at the same time encouraging social integration, with improvements in the quality of life for all segments of the population" (2000). Based on this definition, liveability elements have been selected to communicate the status of the urban environment, which help to determine how successful strategies and policies could be enforced in order to attain liveability goals.

### **3.1. Basic Needs**

The availability of food, shelter, education, work, income, security and health care indicate the most essential elements for sustaining urban communities. The fulfilment of one's basic needs denotes the minimum requirement for liveability of an urban area. Securing basic needs and obtaining minimal opportunities for economic growth are inevitably prioritised ahead of addressing long term environmental causes (Bramley et al, 2006). Facilities such as supermarkets, doctors, chemists, schools, post offices, and banks/building societies can be identified as essential. While a wider range of facilities within neighbourhoods, such as public sports facilities, libraries, community centres and corner shops can also hold significance to people (Bramley et al, 2006). Without the availability of such facilities, residents would not have the resources needed to live in the inner city.

Food and shelter are our most basic physiological needs. The availability of a range of types of housing in the inner city is paramount. Durable design and construction of urban infrastructure is paramount but the need for ongoing care and maintenance is inevitable and must also be provided for. Well designed housing lowers long term maintenance costs and provides better security (MfE, 2005).

Reducing rates of crime, protection from fear of victimisation and avoidance/mitigation of the effects of man-made or natural hazards should be aims for urban planners. Security is essential for both private residences and public spaces in the inner city. There is a widely accepted connection between crime and urban form (Bramley et al, 2006). Active building frontage promotes natural street surveillance whereas areas made up of "blank walls, high fences, parking lots or the backs of commercial buildings" are more likely to be targeted (Porta & Renne, 2005).

### **3.2. Equality**

Equality is the fair distribution of the benefits and costs of development across society. The importance of social equality for individuals and families, groups and neighbours is

well recognised as part of the sustainable development rhetoric (Bramley et al, 2006). Strategic planning for equity in urban development tends to focus on the accessibility of jobs and the affordability of housing. However to meet the requirements of equality, other elements must be given attention too.

Social exclusion occurs as a consequence of discrimination, depleted living environments and low educational attainment. Some socio-economic groups may be deprived of the institutions and services, social networks and development opportunities required for effective participation in today's society. Cities should be based around "inclusive societies that respect and celebrate diversity and care for the disadvantaged" (MfE, 2005). This should include some spaces designed for residents with a certain status rather than blanket designing for the average adult. Children, the elderly, criminals or the ill, for example, benefit from stimulating or restorative environments that are sympathetic to their unique circumstances (Montgomery, 2010). Urban areas where all citizens are accommodated are more likely to be respected and upheld by residents as they develop a sense of ownership.

### **3.3. Sense of Place**

Sustaining urban residents' sense of place involves the preservation of cultural and biological heritage, in order to retain the connectedness to our history and environment. Town and cities are important expressions of national identity (MfE, 2005). Urban design should be built on the unique strengths and characteristics of each place to reflect its locally distinctive identity. This requires a "place-based approach" (DIA, 2008) to urban planning. A place-based approach involves creating unique solutions for each distinctive urban area rather than rolling out nation-wide policies. Our towns and cities are distinctive to New Zealand and greatly different from each other.

New Zealand has a strong Maori heritage and agricultural roots. The development of our towns and cities must preserve our sense of place and the relationship of tangata whenua with the land. The uniqueness of our urban areas are characterised by their biological setting and natural topography (MfE, 2005). Christchurch's mountain backdrop

and floodplain should be a fundamental consideration in the urban design of the city. New Zealand's diverse ethnic mix, indigenous Maori, Europeans, Pacific Islanders and Asians, should be reflected and cultural expression celebrated.

Liveability requires the recognition of the role of the natural environment in an urban setting and maintenance or even recreation of these natural networks throughout the city. These green networks should connect public and private open spaces. The connection with the environment that green spaces provide is so desired as it fits some "ancestral niche" (Montgomery, 2010). Development should not be made at the expense of the natural environment (distinctive landforms, water bodies, indigenous plants and animals) or the city's cultural heritage. Elements such as sky exposure should be maintained in the interest of our connectedness to the environment (Porta & Renne, 2005).

Higher density urban areas are well regarded as being more environmentally and economically sustainable however there is some debate about the liveability of relative densities. This relates back to pride of place as higher density development can be seen as more or less aesthetically pleasing. Having a sense of pride and vested interest in an area means that you'll want to remain there and contribute to its ongoing development (Bramley et al, 2006). As surveys regarding attractiveness of different urban densities have shown results at both ends of the spectrum, this may reinforce the necessity of having a mix of housing types and densities.

### **3.4. Governance**

The promotion of public participation in planning, consultation, non adversarial decision making, and following a shared vision indicates a liveable society. The emphasis should be on moving toward participatory democracy through these means. Planners need to facilitate citizen participation in political decisions and policies that affect those citizens in order to produce outcomes that work for them. Local input, sourced across a broad demographic, allows planners to gain insight about the area that expert knowledge may not provide.



The planning and management of resources must include the notion of kaitiakitanga; environmental guardianship from a traditional Maori world view. Maori offer a unique indigenous perspective during the formulation of policy and decision making.

Participation by Maori in urban planning should not merely occur to meet the end goal of achieving equity. Maori cultural heritage is a significant part of the New Zealand identity that should be represented in our urban spaces. Maori bring a distinct set of traditional values and customs which balance the, often dominant, Eurocentric Western worldview we see in present day planning.

In order to achieve effective local governance with free exchange of ideas between decision makers and the people, the planning itself needs to be transparent and information made readily available to the public. Urban development needs a clear sense of direction, which is usually achievable through the formation of a master development plan (DIA, 2008). Such a document should ensure priorities and trade-offs are made explicit. Formal and informal opportunities for discussion should be arranged at all stages of planning so residents from all walks of life are able to attend and contribute. Leadership needs to occur at many levels.

### **3.5. Individual capability**

Our urban environment needs to provide for the development of human potential, including skills, creativity and personal values. Investment in people, including creative individuals from the early stages of the inner city design process encourages richness, diversity and makes a functional place memorable. Urban design should incorporate art in public spaces and utilise new technologies. Centres of learning and innovation require support in order to foster these attributes in the next generation.

The inner city should encourage people to be more physically active by providing a variety of well-integrated transport options but giving precedence to walking, cycling and shared transport; planning for the pedestrian over the automobile (Porta & Renne, 2005). "A well designed transport network integrated with land use improves accessibility and

mobility and encourages healthier lifestyles” (MfE, 2005). Permeability, or street connectivity, affects accessibility, the flow of movement and ease of navigation. A legible street network should offer both physical and visual directness through small street block sizes, four-way intersections and limited cul-de-sacs (Porta & Renne, 2005).

In order for a variety of people to maintain an urban lifestyle, greater land use diversity needs to be provided for. In order to reduce resident turnover and maintain community stability, areas need to provide a setting for a variety of life stages (Bramley et al, 2006). Flexible design provides for unforeseen uses, in turn creating resilience, as the infrastructure and spaces will remain useful over the long term.

There remains a perceived trade-off between the density and liveability of the inner city. This element of urban form has remained a key focus in liveability literature, with debate centred on whether “policy should seek to contain the spatial extent of urban development”. However, curtailing low density development may improve ease of access to facilities and services (Bramley et al, 2006). Also, having a range of land uses within a walkable area decreases the need for motorised movements (Porta & Renne, 2005). Conversely it can be argued that particular neighbourhood amenities require a lower level of density and are necessary for the development of human potential (Bramley et al, 2006).

### **3.6. Social capital**

Social capital is the provision for conviviality, interaction, and cumulative action so that community can be empowered to function as one collective entity (Putnam, 2000). Social capital can be aided in an urban context by establishing supporting networks that facilitate co-ordination, and co-operation for mutual benefit (Bramley et al, 2006). Facilities within a neighbourhood allow for community participation and the opportunity to create greater ties within the community. These facilities can include sport/exercise, adult education, community/residents groups, support groups, religious or other groups (Bramley et al, 2006). Participation in community activities at these facilities also help to empower custodianship, the sense of responsibility and ownership that residents need to

care for our shared spaces. A shared sense of morality and common purpose can facilitate social cohesion (Bramley et al, 2006).

Interaction within communities and families needs to occur; simply achieving a community of mixed characteristics is not enough (Bramley et al, 2006). Promoting higher density development increases the potential for spontaneous interaction and fosters the 'sense of community' that comes with face-to-face communication. Orientation away from car travel may lift street vitality through increased interaction. It is argued that social inclusion is encouraged in cities of higher density and mixed-use urban form. These characteristics tend to generate mixed communities and, consequently, lower levels of segregation (Bramley et al, 2006).

#### **4. Liveable Cities**

The case studies chosen were Melbourne, Australia and Vancouver, Canada. These cities were chosen based on two well renowned liveability surveys, the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Ranking and Report, and the Mercer Quality of Living Survey. The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) is a research and analyst team made up of academics that bring together data on markets, industries and countries to help businesses, financial firms and governments to understand changes, create opportunities and manage risks (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014). Mercer is an information product solutions business bringing together worldwide human resource information to "plan, develop, implement, administer, and measure the effectiveness of human resource programs and policies" (Mercer, 2015).

Melbourne and Vancouver were ranked within the top three liveable cities based on the latest report Global Liveability Ranking and Report issued, August 2014. This report ranked Melbourne, Australia as the world's most liveable city and rated Vancouver, Canada the third most liveable (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2014). The 2012 Mercer Quality of Living Survey ranked Vancouver the fifth most liveable and Melbourne the seventeenth (Mercer, 2012). Melbourne and Vancouver were chosen for this cross-case analysis with Christchurch as the three cities are culturally comparable. Policies and plans

implemented in the interests of liveability in Melbourne and Vancouver are likely to lend themselves well to Christchurch's urban environment also.

#### **4.1. Melbourne, Australia**

Melbourne, capital city of the Australian State of Victoria, has a diverse population of around 4.1 million residents. Located in the South-East corner of Australia, the greater metropolitan area spans 7,694 km<sup>2</sup>. Melbourne's inner city covers 37.6 km<sup>2</sup> and is home to over 100,000 permanent residents, with around 805,000 using the city on an average day. The City of Melbourne bears the 'Hoddle Grid' layout, with expansive parks and gardens encompassing the renowned alleyways and arcades of contemporary and Victorian architecture (City of Melbourne, 2015a). The city is praised for its educational institutions, level of healthcare, research and development, entertainment, tourism and sports, and recognised as the cultural capital of Australia (City of Melbourne, 2015a).

##### **4.1.1. State of Liveability**

The city prides itself on the level of diversity apparent in household types, socio economic groups, and ethnic backgrounds. The principal household type is small households; lone person dwellings or couples without children. The number of group households is also relatively high. The IMAP states that attraction for these groups of people to move to and stay in the region is the accessibility of education, employment, and recreation facilities and the accessibility of public transport itself (2006). The inner city has a high population density relative to other Australian cities. The major regional infrastructure and facilities, such as the port, hospitals, research and tertiary institutions, are a draw card for economic development. The City's urban planners work to balance the pressures for residential development with the expansion of key economic facilities and infrastructure (City of Melbourne, 2006).

The Inner Melbourne Region dominates other areas with concentrations of activity. Retail trade in Melbourne attracts large numbers into the inner city and provides a great deal of employment opportunity for residents. The presence of scientific research, higher

education and biotechnology institutions demonstrate the investment the City has made in developing the individual capability of its residents (City of Melbourne, 2006). The manufacturing sector fosters businesses on the leading edge of technology and innovation, which will provide for the progression of the city into the future. The Inner Melbourne Region has also invested heavily in the “creativity characteristics” of the area. The creative capital of Melbourne’s Inner Region is three times higher than the Victorian average and, across the whole country, is only surpassed by the inner Sydney region. The city accommodates a great number of residents employed in creative or artistic occupations whose pursuits involve “creating meaningful new forms” (City of Melbourne, 2006). The vibrant street culture, open spaces, music scene and nightlife are bolstered and marketed. This further encourages people to live and work in the inner city.

Equality and social acceptance are positive outcomes from the level of social, sexual and cultural diversity. Exposure to multiculturalism, alternative lifestyles and people of all sexual orientations is inevitable at such high density, mixed use living (City of Melbourne, 2006). In Melbourne’s Inner City, discrimination and fear of victimisation are relatively low. The inner city provides a tolerant environment where residents are free to express their individuality.

The workers, residents and visitors to Melbourne are attracted to the high aesthetic value of the City. Retaining the region’s unique 19<sup>th</sup> Century heritage has been made a priority throughout the development process. The character of the natural environment and the existing built environment has been respected by maintaining the topography, bays, waterways, green spaces, significant roads and boulevards which make up the fundamental structure of Melbourne’s inner region (City of Melbourne, 2006). Careful consideration for the relationship between these structural elements and the built form has also been given. Planners have also acknowledged the importance of open space and recreational opportunities found in parks, beaches and plazas (City of Melbourne, 2006).

“Being a great place to live is not only symptomatic of a successful region, it is a precondition for success” (City of Melbourne, 2006).

#### **4.1.1.1. Laneways Case**

Melbourne's inner city laneways were developed as a means of increasing accessibility and permeability of the parcels of land which constitute the grid layout. The laneways served a valuable economic role but were neglected in the latter half of the last century (Ferreter, Lewis & Pickford, 2008). The small streets and connecting alleyways had become sites of deviant behaviour, such as illegal graffiti and tagging, and earned a reputation of being unsafe. The last twenty years has seen the City of Melbourne employ a participatory governance approach to the revitalisation of existing laneways and further development of the laneway network. Melbourne's contemporary street art is well renowned. Participatory democracy and the City's public information services has led to a 'creative commons' approach. Street art is deemed acceptable throughout the city with the owner of the space and the council's permission. Anybody may apply for the registration of a piece of street art or register a proposal to produce and temporarily install their work. The lanes are now lined with a diversity of eateries, entertainment and retail opportunities and have become popular, engaging spaces, offering better connections and enhanced character.

#### **4.1.2. Upcoming Strategies and Actions**

The Melbourne City Council is working toward achieving sustainability, with a bold end goal of becoming one of the world's most sustainable cities. The Council's approach to making the city more liveable was to launch the Inner Melbourne Action Plan (IMAP) in 2006. The plan provides a "framework for the future growth and development of the inner Melbourne region" (City of Melbourne, 2015b). Set out in the IMAP are a number of key directions to achieving liveability, which are: a more compact, fairer, greener, prosperous city, with better growth management, transport links, planning decisions and networks with regional cities (2006).

The Council aims to strengthen accessibility so that facilities of the region are physically and socially accessible to people of all abilities. The Council is working towards making the inner city more pedestrian friendly in general. Walkers require a high quality, clearly

delineated space. The creation of a 'Walking City' with a safe and attractive experience for pedestrians being the central design goal will be a major outcome for the IMAP. In order to achieve this they will retain the pattern of local streets and laneways while making them more 'active' (City of Melbourne, 2006). Pedestrian and cyclist oriented signage system, including walking times, will be implemented to improve route legibility and priority to walkers at intersections. More direct links will be created between popular private and public spaces and facilities. This may involve laying new pathways between sites such as Docklands and the Arts Precinct. Cycling will be promoted by creating a stronger break between bicycles and cars, through increasing the number of fully separated cycle lanes (City of Melbourne 2006). Strategies will be implemented to increase public transport use, such as improved connectivity, and decreasing traffic congestion, thereby, better accommodating the use of the inner city by pedestrians and cyclists (City of Melbourne, 2006).

The residents' sense of place is to be strengthened by further celebrating the Inner Melbourne region's 19<sup>th</sup> Century heritage. Heritage assets and areas of contemporary design need to be managed alike as the city becomes more densely populated and intensively used. This will be achieved through the development and documentation of what constitutes this character and the significance of its retention. Such a document should then be used to inform local policy and design (City of Melbourne, 2006). Design standards and built form controls should be developed to further protect heritage areas. Improvements should be made to the character of major roads and boulevards that have been developed for function, at the expense of the character of the area (City of Melbourne, 2006). A change of mindset is needed to view roads as having many functions rather than just for transportation purposes.

The Inner Melbourne Region aims to replenish the stock of low-cost housing lost to gentrification in order to retain social diversity of the region. Balancing new infrastructure requirements with the preservation of public open space without disrupting the historical significance and character of streetscapes will be a priority. The council will be working collaboratively with registered and not-for-profit housing organisations to provide more affordable and better integrated housing (City of Melbourne, 2006). There is also a need

to ensure that social infrastructure and service provision meets projected growth in each inner city area. A planning scheme policy will be introduced to the management of this social infrastructure so the role and character in each distinct area is provided for. Specific aims to improve the amenity and safety of activity centres with improved design and active frontages are included in the IMAP (2006).

Another key aim is to “maintain liveability for the creative workforce” (City of Melbourne, 2006). The council will be developing support packages for the practical implementation of emerging creative business; specifically those involved with new ideas, knowledge, and design. State and local representatives will be working alongside universities to develop a stronger role in regional development.

Part of what makes Melbourne liveable is the network of green spaces relieving built-up areas across the Inner Melbourne Region (City of Melbourne, 2015a). The IMAP outlines a strategy to complete the identified gaps in this network. New open space links will be created where links may never have been properly established and where open spaces have been severed by road or rail (City of Melbourne, 2006). During the implementation of new green space, the management needs to be balanced in terms of recreational use and ecological values. The function of the different areas of green space needs to be established, along with site specific environmental values (City of Melbourne, 2006). For example, creating a walkway alongside a waterway may mean the water edge requires further riparian vegetation to be implemented. Spaces such as green corridors should be considered, not only in terms of use by walkers and cyclists, but to function as a wildlife link.

The governance arrangements for the overall implementation of the Plan are going to follow three broad principles: accountability, transparency and continuity. These principles will be delivered by establishing a special committee, who will deliver projects and initiatives with a clear focus (City of Melbourne, 2006).



## **4.2. Vancouver, Canada**

Vancouver is a seaport city on the mainland of Canada. The greater metropolitan area has a population of approximately 2.4 million residents, while the Inner City is home to around 603,500 residents over an area of only 114 km<sup>2</sup> (City of Vancouver, 2012c). While only the third largest, this establishes Vancouver as the most densely populated city in Canada. Vancouver boasts a culturally diverse population, with under half the population speaking English as their first language (City of Vancouver, 2014c). From strong aboriginal roots, the city was established in the traditional territories of the Musqueam, the Squamish and the Tsleil-Waututh peoples. The city is well recognised for the natural settings surrounding its urban centre. Vancouver has consistently been named in the top five liveable cities worldwide (City of Vancouver, 2012a).

### **4.2.1. State of Liveability**

Vancouver is part of an international relationship scheme with five 'sister cities'. The cities work collaboratively to promote educational exchange, share information and increase economic development. These partnerships are facilitated by city staff and active community groups (City of Vancouver, 2012c). The different areas of the city are recognised for their distinct culture and character. Each area is provided its own community page with community-specific information, such as upcoming events, projects and initiatives, local news, services and amenities available (City of Vancouver, 2014). Inclusion is a key focus of City staff who work closely with community groups and other agencies to ensure residents needs are met and to solve any critical social issues that may arise. They advise staff directly on policies and strategies relating to childcare and child development, capacity building and equitable programmes for Aboriginal peoples, care for disadvantaged seniors, active partner programs for youth, multicultural and diverse communities initiatives, and programs to absolve prejudice (City of Vancouver, 2014).

Vancouver City staff help alleviate the inequalities Aboriginal peoples may face elsewhere. Their role is to help Aboriginal communities overcome barriers, gain equal access to services, and participate in civic government. Staff themselves participate in all

Aboriginal community initiatives to make sure the Aboriginal perspective is being heard and they remain 'in the know' on current issues and concerns. City staff also encourage the collaboration of different groups to build networks and develop cross-cultural understanding (City of Vancouver, 2012c). The Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre has been developed as a bridge between the Vancouver Police Department and the Aboriginal people of Vancouver. The Centre provides a secure place to gather, identify and discuss safety and justice issues directly affecting the Aboriginal community (City of Vancouver, 2012c).

Urban planning in Vancouver is centred on the liveability of the city. Community plans are produced for each individual neighbourhood to provide guidance and direction over a period of 20-30 years (City of Vancouver, 2014). The use of community plans as well as an overall city plan means that the City prides itself on its high quality design that retains aesthetic and functional value, and has residential security while allowing for growth and increasing density (City of Vancouver, 2014). The support and engagement of residents and the vibrant inner city street life increases the liveability of the area. Contemporary art can be found in public spaces throughout the city, facilitated by both civic and private sector projects. Gaining recognition is the environmental art initiative; sculpture, made by local residents and artists, out of natural materials which are not destructive to the environment. The City fosters creative individuals by converting under-utilised facilities into artist spaces, providing subsidies and grants, and creating residency programmes for artists (City of Vancouver, 2014).

The provincial government upholds the role of funding, subsidising and facilitating the development of infrastructure to support childcare, group care, and other family support services (City of Vancouver, 2014). Although not directly providing childcare services, the City plays a role in planning, coordinating and advocating for high quality, affordable, accessible and integrated childcare services. Supportive housing, a council priority, is being increased in neighbourhoods with high rates of homelessness. Supportive housing is affordable residencies with access to support staff that assist with tenant stability, independent living skills and integrating into the community (City of Vancouver, 2012c).

The City is working to promote the well-being of its residents with measures including health and wellness classes, and health-related support groups meeting at community centres. The City has improved accessibility to treatment services for illnesses which are typically less well recognised, such as mental illness and addiction. Social, recreation and exercise programmes are provided for at community centres. Adapted options of each of these programmes are available so that people of all abilities can stay active (City of Vancouver, 2014).

The city is physically accessible to those of all abilities. 95% of the sidewalk kerbs in the City's downtown core have been installed with kerb ramps to assist those using wheelchairs, walkers and strollers. Areas with a high flow of foot traffic are prioritised; however, anyone can install a kerb ramp installation anywhere. Beach wheelchairs and path kits are available to those wheelchair bound for use at the City's beaches. Restricted access parking spots are reserved for those with disabled parking permits (City of Vancouver, 2012c). The City has created what they call a "universally accessible transit system"; fully accessible to people of all abilities. A shared-ride service is available from door-to-door as an option for those with a disability. They are now working on ensuring waiting and boarding areas are improved for use by the less able, by ensuring there are kerb ramps, unobstructed sidewalks and smooth surfaces. It is also ensured that access is still available to public transport for all abilities during construction and special events (City of Vancouver, 2012c).

Community participation is encouraged with up-to-date documents, opportunities for submissions and information of the status of applications all readily available to the public on the City of Vancouver website. Dates, agendas and reports are available for upcoming meetings as well as footage of past meetings that aren't considered sensitive information. Talk Vancouver, the City's online civic participation space, has been developed as part of the Engaged Community Initiative (City of Vancouver, 2012e). Park Board meetings are frequently held and are open to and accessible for the general public. Members of the public may sign up to speak on particular issues at these meetings. To further participate in the community, residents may apply to join a civic agency, board or committee. The Council encourages diversity of applicants from all areas of the city in

order for the broader community to be represented (City of Vancouver, 2012e). “Pop-Up City Hall” is a pilot programme designed to increase public participation for those unable to access in-person city services. Customer service representatives travel to local community service centres where local residents can pick up resources, register for courses, volunteer and learn about council services (City of Vancouver, 2012e).

The City minimises dependence on private vehicles by prioritising sustainable modes of transport. Vancouver has a network of low-stress, high quality cycling routes that connect key destinations, including transit areas. Greenways encourage walkers and cyclists, while simultaneously calming traffic. The greenways are evenly distributed throughout the city to ensure accessibility for all residents (City of Vancouver, 2014).

#### **4.2.1.1. Collingwood Case**

Urban intensification is a fundamental planning strategy used in both Australian and Canadian cities (Davison, 2011). This approach is also frequently resisted by those closest to the areas affected. As previously discussed, higher density living and the urban intensification that is required to achieve a more compact city form are widely regarded as necessary for urban sustainability. Bringing forth community acceptance of urban intensification is dependent on good governance and can effectively be achieved through a participatory and debate centred planning process (Davison, 2011). This has been demonstrated in the Vancouver neighbourhood of Collingwood where effective governance meant a proposed high-rise development, initially contested by the community was eventually supported.

Collingwood, a low density, working class area, was the site proposed for redevelopment into a mixed-use, higher density project known as “Collingwood Village”. Left socio-culturally fragmented by previous district planning, Collingwood community members feared the effects of urban intensification would further deplete neighbourhood character. A change of policy makers saw the transformation of planning practice and the quality of urban development improved (Punter, 2003). The new councillors aimed to integrate a more “transparent and participatory development control system” (Davison,

2011) into the urban planning process through a citywide planning strategy. This 'City Plan' was to be produced by means of front-loaded public participation, where the community gives input on performance measures before data is gathered.

Previous consultation processes had led to the establishment of a committee of local residents and city planners, the members of which were in charge of shaping planning and development objectives for the area. Upon the private developer submitting their formal application for redevelopment, the community leaders brought together a coalition of community organisations, presenting a unified front from which to negotiate. The coalition campaigned for a single point of contact to be established at the City Council and an experienced social planner was designated this responsibility (Davison, 2011).

The City of Vancouver orchestrated a number of public workshops, meetings and displays where Council members and the developer explained the initial proposals, future directions and allowed feedback from community members. The meetings were held where the people were – in well-used neighbourhood facilities. They were multi-lingual, conveyed in simple terms, and planning jargon was explained in terms of significance and meaning. These measures were the means by which community members, not usually engaged, were included in the planning and design process (Davison, 2011). Vitally, the Council representatives explained the development process, why the city was currently advocating urban intensification policies and the likely outcomes of the change.

Community members conveyed the persistence of neighbourhood character in the face of further development as a key concern and the primary grounds for opposition toward Collingwood Village. Through a participatory and debate-centred planning process, it was brought to light that the neighbourhood's character was "more social and experiential than it was physical" (Davison, 2011). Collingwood, rather than being architecturally cohesive, was traditionally recognised for its social cohesiveness, vibrant street life, and high levels of community involvement.

The council representatives encouraged the community to view the redevelopment in terms of the improvements that could be ascertained. The development provided an opportunity to address current issues and restore the former neighbourhood character.

The lack of community services and social infrastructure was flagged as a current issue and a cause of the neighbourhood's social fragmentation. It was in this attribute that the opportunity for urban intensification to enhance and sustain the existing social character was found (Davison, 2011). Establishing new community facilities through the redevelopment would stimulate community interaction and engagement, lowering levels of segregation and providing for collective action, thereby fostering the restoration of some of the area's traditional character (Davison, 2011).

Attendees of these public meetings and workshops were given the tools to explore the different ways the layout and density of the development could be accommodated within the financial constraints of the developer. This allowed the community leaders themselves to come to the realisation that in order to attain the needed social infrastructure an increase in profits generated by the project was required and an increase in the density of development was the best way to achieve this. The understanding developed through this process of public consultation meant that community leaders were able to confidently negotiate the proposals and community members were able to accept the proposals (Davison, 2011). Higher residential densities concentrated into tall buildings in exchange for social infrastructure and public open space was the middle ground reached between the private and public parties involved. "Urban intensification and neighbourhood character became mutually dependent" (Davison, 2011).

By the time an amended planning application was submitted, the vast majority of the Collingwood community members supported the development, many of whom thought urban intensification was crucial to restoring the character of the area (Davison, 2011). Construction began in 1995 and Collingwood Village was completed in 2006. The development was built in a number of stages with the provision of community facilities and public open space at each stage. Part of maintaining the neighbourhood's community spiritedness and traditional character was dependent on the willingness of those residents of Collingwood Village to interact with neighbours and immerse themselves in community life. Due to the participatory and debate-centred nature of the redevelopment's planning, community members were vying for successful urban change and actively sought to realise the desired neighbourhood character (Davison, 2011).

#### **4.2.1.2. Upcoming Strategies and Actions**

Vancouver has a number of initiatives to facilitate multicultural, diverse communities and ensure an inclusive society. The Dialogues Project is a collaboration between Aboriginal and immigrant communities to strengthen understanding and build relations. The diverse community partners will take part in five main initiatives: dialogue circles, community research, cultural exchange visits, youth and elders programme and legacy projects (City of Vancouver, 2012c).

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021 sets out the city's overall direction for housing, including the types of housing needed to meet the diverse needs of all residents and actions to improve and preserve existing housing. Low barrier shelters will be targeted to improve homelessness, especially during winter. The use of research and innovation to create improved housing options will be explored. Financial and regulatory tools will be used to encourage a range of housing types for the diverse population. Rather than just focussing on the supply of housing, the council is aiming to increase the mix of housing across neighbourhoods, thereby further diversifying communities (City of Vancouver, 2012c).

The Public Art Program is an ongoing programme which has been in place since 1991. The vision for the programme is to commission contemporary public art, encourage creative thinking, to develop a distinctive cityscape and foster stewardship of public spaces. Public artworks enrich the urban streetscape so the experience of the city is more stimulating and engaging to pedestrians. Future direction for the program will be to better integrate the art into civic infrastructure, which may in turn strengthen partnerships between artists and public agencies (City of Vancouver, 2014). The introduction of "artist-initiated projects" will see the council inviting artists to submit their own proposal for type and location of art projects and bringing concepts of interest to the community into consideration. Vancouver will also be calling for an increase in temporary artworks for a diverse range of platforms (City of Vancouver, 2014).

To ensure resiliency and liveability in the face of climate change, Vancouver has developed the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy. Security from not only man-made but natural hazards plays a role in the liveability of an area. The strategy includes adaptation measures that can be incorporated into new projects and businesses can take on board in their daily actions. The strategy was developed based on the specific impacts anticipated climate changes would have across the city. Vulnerability and risk assessments were completed and workshops were held to decide on preparation needed for how the adaptation measures (City of Vancouver, 2012a).

Due to launch this year is the City's Public Bike Share System, whereby a network of bicycles will be available free from automated docking stations for short-term use around the City (City of Vancouver, 2012a). The system aligns with the goals of a number of other projects, plans, and strategies current in place such as the City Transportation Plan, the Greenest City Action Plan, and the Health City Strategy.

#### **4.3. Common Aspects Across Melbourne and Vancouver**

The characteristics contributing to Melbourne and Vancouver's liveability are remarkably consistent across the two cities. While a compact city development pattern was not specifically the vision for both cities, underlying characters of this urban form are present in each. The cities favoured internal growth over external. They, therefore, both have relatively high population densities in the inner city. The balance of residential development, economic and social infrastructure and open spaces are priorities for urban planners across all three cities. Underutilised areas have been transformed into more functional, multifaceted spaces. The cities advocate for the value of nature for human life. They have networks of green spaces relieving built-up areas across the inner city, with green corridors and walkways inviting people from space to space. The cities have a clear street user hierarchy, with walkers and cyclist prioritised ahead of private vehicle users. Clearly delineated spaces with pedestrian and cyclist oriented signage systems. They have established strong public transport networks with options for users at any hour. The cities focus on good governance and effective citizen participation. The respective city councils want citizens involved in plans and projects that affect them and



recognise citizens as experts on their own living environment. Each city is noted as having a highly diverse population and providing a tolerant environment where residents are free to express their individuality. The cities are also providing for the inclusion and expression of those cultures previously oppressed.

## **5. Christchurch Policy Analysis**

### **5.1. Christchurch, New Zealand**

Christchurch City is located on the east of New Zealand's South Island and is home to 356,700 residents. Christchurch covers a total area of approximately 150,000 hectares which has been sectioned into seven wards and governed by a Council and 8 community boards (Christchurch City Council, 2013). The inner city is laid out in a grid pattern, bounded by the 'four avenues'. Christchurch is widely recognised as the 'Garden City' of New Zealand. Historically, Maori were the first to inhabit the Christchurch area, the iwi Ngai Tahu claiming rights over the area and the vast majority of the South Island. European settlers arrived in the early 1800's and the English influence is still apparent in the grid layout, historic architecture and expansive gardens of the city (CCC, 2013). 2010 and 2011 saw a series of earthquakes cause widespread damage to the city and surrounding areas. Following such devastation, the rebuild presents Christchurch with an opportunity to mould a more environmentally, economically and liveable centre.

### **5.2. State of Liveability**

In 2009, prior to the Canterbury earthquakes, a study of Central Christchurch was undertaken by Danish urban designer Jan Gehl, to determine the quality of public spaces, how a better sense of community could be created and how public life could be sustained (CCC, 2015a). The study identified a number of strengths of the then Central City. A number of inner city lanes had been successfully developed which increased pedestrian opportunities and revitalised the streetscape. The gridded urban structure was recognised as providing an efficient, legible and adaptable setting. The wide, flat streets had the potential to be adapted to better accommodate walkers and cyclists.

Surveys have found that the existing inner city population was made up largely by young and middle-aged residents with children and elderly under-represented. Gehl speculated that this may have resulted from the accessibility and legibility of the pedestrian network, alongside the lack of activity aimed toward those age groups. The City was relatively active during work hours, however Gehl found that pedestrian numbers faced a sharp decline after shops and offices shut, even during the weekend (Gehl Architects, 2009). Lack of activity means lack of natural surveillance and reduced safety in the City Centre outside of business hours. More attractive public spaces and facilities geared toward a broader audience would encourage workers, residents and visitors to stay in the city longer. Evening and winter activities, in particular, were notably absent.

It was reported that open spaces saw pedestrians mostly standing or sitting with little small-scale commercial activity, child-friendly, or cultural activities. This was considered likely due to low pedestrian count, inadequate quality of public space, poor connectivity, limited range of activities, and low existing user population (Gehl Architects, 2009). Although areas designated for public space were adequate, these areas all offered similar layout and activities and were therefore considered to be underutilised (Gehl Architects, 2009). The study recommended strengthening the atmosphere of public spaces by establishing a clear character for each. The study found there was disconnect between the city's attractions and the natural environment that could be amended. A network of public spaces should "invite people from one place to the next" (Gehl Architects, 2009). More pedestrian entrances to the Botanical Gardens and Hagley Park would provide for better connections. Walking links between key public spaces needed to be implemented or strengthened to preserve connectivity. Green spaces such as The Avon, Hagley Park and the Botanic Gardens had incomplete walkways, frequently interrupted at road crossings (Gehl Architects, 2009).

It was evident that one of the main issues working against the liveability of the area was the priorities in the street user hierarchy. The inner city was suffering from heavy through traffic which meant a number of the one-way streets were acting as barriers to pedestrian users, as well as an overall decline in the quality of public spaces (Gehl

Architects, 2009). Infrastructure provisions for cyclists were also lacking. The inner city cycling network was incomplete and cycle lanes provided no buffer between cyclists and other traffic (Gehl Architects, 2009). A dedicated cycle network with clear signage and sufficient cycle parking was recommended. Contributing to the poor walking and cycling environment was the high number of buses that ran directly through the Central City. Buses are vehicles of high impact and the level of through traffic would suggest that some bus routes need not enter into the inner city (Gehl Architects, 2009). Dedicated bus lanes along popular bus routes would ensure that those bus services' needed in the city were frequent and reliable. Gehl also recommended that Columbo street particularly should be restricted to walkers, cyclists and public transport use only, while some one-way streets be converted to two-way to improve vehicle flow and achieve balance between transport modes (2009). Furthermore, that a centralised 'Transport Interchange' should be developed at the periphery of the city centre with bettered facilities at bus stops. The report suggested extended bus services would support a 24-hour city (Gehl Architects, 2009).

### **5.3. Current Strategies and Actions**

The Christchurch City Council is taking a number of creative and innovative approaches to the earthquake recovery under the banner of the Transitional City Work Programme. In order to draw people back into the inner city during the rebuild, the council is working collaboratively with the community and local businesses to fill empty and under-utilised spaces with creative temporary projects, to bring vibrancy back to the streetscape. The Council has established both the Transitional City Projects Fund and the Creative Industries Support Fund to assist with these community led initiatives. Projects such as Gap Filler and Greening the Rubble receive Council support, along with the Life in Vacant Spaces Trust which assists in acquiring the interim use of these private spaces (CCC, 2015a). The initiatives were established to attract and retain creative and talented individuals to the area, while enriching community involvement; project proposals are welcomed from anyone. Empty lots are being converted into ecological areas, resting spots, and even mini golf courses.

The Council is working alongside the Christchurch Art Gallery and New Zealand artists on art installations in Cathedral Square. These pieces will represent the history of the square and provide a channel for the community to reconnect with the inner city following the earthquakes (CCC, 2015a). The Council aims to further strengthen the creative sector by supporting workshops, providing rent subsidies, establishing recurrent arts programmes, and encouraging arts clusters. Historic areas are undergoing restoration where feasible, such as New Regent Street, where the Council is also assisting the recovery of the businesses affected. Enlarged pedestrian areas and narrowed carriage-ways indicate a shift from motor vehicle dominated transport toward pedestrian precedent streets (CCC, 2015a).

### **5.3.1. Christchurch Central Recovery Plan**

The Christchurch City Council was required to develop a draft Recovery Plan for the central business district, under the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Act. A special unit within Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, the Christchurch Central Development Unit, was formed to finalise and implement the Christchurch Central Recovery Plan (CCC, 2012). Within the Plan is the “A Liveable City” chapter which sets out a vision, objectives and initiatives for central city living. Despite being presented under the banner of ‘liveability’, the chapter is purely residential with consultation, green space, amenities and accessibility being outlined elsewhere in the plan. My study of the Christchurch Central Recovery Plan will provide an overview of a number of chapters relevant to this research.

#### **5.3.1.1. A Liveable City**

The ‘Liveable City’ Chapter begins by stating public consultation took place during July and August of 2014. The document provides detail of the initiatives planned to revitalise central city living. The City will be investing in a range of cultural, leisure and entertainment facilities. Residential development will be catalysed in order to draw in the 12,000 to 24,000 residential target required to sustain the prosperity of the inner city (Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority, 2015). In order to stimulate demand, the

Christchurch City Council, CERA and other government agencies have developed a number of initiatives. Perhaps the most significant of which being a mixed-tenure development model. Currently planned at a single development location, these housing options will be implemented throughout the city centre to increase accessibility for a range of residents.

Residential development is set to occur throughout the central city, offering a diverse range of housing options that are well integrated with local context (CERA, 2015). The Plan reports having conducted research on the traits necessary for community members to consider becoming inner city residents. Conclusions drawn from this research were that the majority of Christchurch residents want intimate, walkable, inclusive neighbourhoods with distinct character, which are close to amenities, and have open and green spaces (CERA, 2015). These neighbourhoods should be safe, with access to education and employment. Low rise buildings of up to three to four storeys will instil a sense of security following the earthquake and a high urban density will give renewed vitality to the central city.

Comprehensive development is being enabled through new Central City Residential Zone provisions. New developments are still required to meet certain standards for the protection of existing and new residents; these regulations are flexible and allow for an accelerated process. Planners are seeking to balance the competing needs of potential and pre-existing residents (CERA, 2015). While flexibility is sought in order to attract a diversity of residents, current residents require certainty of outcomes. Development standards are being limited to regulating amenity for owners/occupiers and interface with neighbours and the public, with some guidance given to urban design (CERA, 2015). The minimum density for the Central City Residential Zones is “one residential unit for every 200m<sup>2</sup> of site area” (CERA, 2015).

The new East Frame neighbourhood will house a residential community of over 1,500 residents in a distinctive park setting alongside the commercial core. The East Frame will make a significant contribution to the open space of the area, which is currently limited. As well as improving the aesthetic of the eastern side of the central city, the Frame will

boast cycle ways, walking paths, community gardens and an all-ages playground. The residencies along the Frame will ensure a reasonable level of security through informal surveillance of this space.

The Christchurch City Council and Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, along with CERA and Te Runanga O Ngai Tahu, are fostering innovation through the rebuild by collaborating to create the Breathe International Urban Design Competition. Entrants designed medium-density residential developments integrating the themes of identity, innovation and sustainability.

#### **5.3.1.2. An Accessible City**

The 'Accessible City' chapter highlights changes to the road user hierarchy. The central city will become more accessible to pedestrians, including those with young children, disabilities, and mobility difficulties. The central core will have reduced traffic speeds and enhanced streetscapes, to prioritise the pedestrian. Some streets may be modified for pedestrian use only, such as the blocks surrounding the new retail precinct. The potential for safe through-block connections is being explored. Accessibility checks are to be tightened in master planning and building consent processes at multiple stages. A number of projects are being encouraged to trial "barrier-free audits". A commitment is being made to ongoing consultation regarding best practice in accessible transport (CERA, 2013).

The use of new and innovative technologies will be pursued as a means of "future-proofing" the system; supporting the projected population growth will require a range of flexible and resilient transport options (CERA, 2013). The implementation of environmentally sensitive measures will occur where possible. For example, the implementation of charging facilities for electric vehicles at off-street parking buildings may be implemented in time. A bilingual signage system is being developed to support all modes of private transport around the central city (CERA, 2013). This information will improve the legibility of the walking and cycling networks, help private vehicles use the

roads more efficiently, provide disability-specific information, and help direct visitors to key attractions and sites of significance.

Private vehicles will be drawn away from the central city to the upgraded four avenues and the city's one-way streets (with one exception) will be retained. The speed limit in the core will be reduced to 30km/hr and reduced speed limits may also be implemented around residential zones in future (CERA, 2013). Main streets will provide only short-term, disability-prioritised, on-street parking for private vehicles. These streets will be urban design enhanced, with landscaping aligned to the character of the surrounding streets and building frontages. Safe, off-street parking will be developed around key destinations but not within the central core. Good design principles will be followed to discourage crime (CERA, 2013).

Main bus routes will be prioritised for buses, pedestrian facilities will be improved throughout, some cycle routes will be prioritised, but not all streets will be able to provide for cyclists (CERA, 2013). Cycle routes will be concentrated at the periphery of the central city with some connections between these and the core. The most frequently used cycling routes will have paths possibly separated by a rumble strip or kerb. Cyclists will be prioritised at intersections along these key routes. Cycle parking facilities will be implemented at popular destinations, new residential developments and near bus stops so a combination of transport modes can be used (CERA, 2013).

The Bus Interchange, a consolidated transit point, is one of the key projects of the rebuild. The facility has been designed to support an increasing number of residents, provide good pedestrian connections, integrate well into the surrounding neighbourhood, and allow for the addition of complementary uses into the future (CERA, 2013). Transport routes will keep to the edge of the core while routes to the interchange itself will be consolidated and provide a more frequent service. "Superstops", with better waiting facilities, will be provided at popular areas around the periphery of the core, with easy pedestrian access to the core (CERA, 2013). The heritage tram will be re-introduced, mainly as a visitor attraction.

#### **5.3.1.3. A Green City**

A new precinct will be developed along the Avon River, giving priority to cyclists and pedestrians, and providing, cafe, bar and hotel users with river views. The River Precinct will be designed for minimal traffic disruption and ease of access from adjoining areas. Abundant seating will be provided along the walkway, as well as sculpture to illustrate the river's culture and heritage (CERA, 2012). Consultation will occur with Ngai Tahu to guide CERA on how best to integrate tangata whenua values. Ngai Tahu objectives for improving river water quality and managing storm water will be met (CERA, 2012). Exotic riparian plantings will be supplemented with native plantings to support river quality, cultural health, and boost the native bird population. Rain gardens will be installed to help manage storm water run-off. The impact of run-off from private parking areas will be off-set by swale plantings. Measures will be taken to improve existing habitat to encourage biodiversity. Cultural markers, artworks, mahinga kai areas, and design features will reflect Maori heritage throughout the city (CERA, 2012).

A number of smaller squares will be established surrounding the main square, each with additional planting. The measures outlined to make Cathedral Square a "year-round space" are to provide additional shading and limit building heights on the north side – allowing more sunlight. Surrounding civic facilities will add to the vibrancy of the Square during the daytime and surrounding entertainment facilities will contribute to the Square's vibrancy and security at night. Space will be reserved for a new cathedral. Victoria Square is the potential site for a cultural centre, and faces redevelopment but with a focus on preservation of heritage in the area.

The City is going to implement a number measures to increase green spaces and foster residents' connectedness to nature. Pocket parks will provide an accessible respite from the built environment at a range of scales and some will offer informal entertainment. Community gardens run by volunteers will be making a greater appearance in the central city where, as well as gardening, residents can learn about healthy eating and sustainable living. Family-friendly parks will act as a link between other cultural, heritage and social attractions. Inner-city streets requiring substantive redevelopment may be turned into



‘eco-streets’ by implementing sustainable solutions to urban environmental issues such as rain gardens and permeable surfaces.

Greener buildings will be constructed supporting features such as renewable energy, local and recycled building materials, roof gardens and green walls. The Christchurch City Council will encourage and provide support to businesses looking to implement sustainability measures.

#### **5.3.1.4. A Vibrant City**

A performing arts precinct will support the arts and creative industries, and encourage co-location of these organisations. Public art is a significant element of the regeneration of Christchurch, with transitional projects already underway and permanent instalments planned for at numerous locations. A new metro sports facility is positioned to be accessible by all modes of transport. The facility will cater to all ages and abilities, and provide a wide range of complementary facilities to attract talented individuals to the area. Within walking distance from the core it will be a covered, multipurpose stadium, which will host sporting and entertainment events.

The health, innovation and emergency services provisions are relevant to the liveability of the city. A hub accommodating health education, research and innovation will be developed. A combined justice and emergency services precinct is also to be developed, providing opportunity for integrated service delivery and collaboration. An innovation precinct will help promote collaborations between innovative businesses and research institutes, while drawing on knowledge from Lincoln University and the nearby University of Canterbury. A new central library will be a multi-faceted facility with additional performance spaces, exhibitions, a learning centre and entertainment for younger people.

## 5.4. Discussion

The Christchurch Central Recovery Plan contains an extensive overview of the liveability measures to be provided for during the rebuild. Many of the strategies covered by the case studies are represented in the Plan. There is a great breadth of actions outlined however a lack of depth as to how these actions will manifest themselves is recorded. Drawing on the elements of liveability described earlier in the study, I will now reflect on how each of these elements are laid out in the Plan, and provide a comparison with the Melbourne and Vancouver case studies .

“Basic needs” is a term not readily used in the Plan, yet these essential provisions can all be accounted for. Amenities, educational facilities, healthcare facilities, and a variety of housing options are to be integrated throughout the city. This should ensure accessibility for most inner city residents. A number of key projects, such as the metro sports facility and the health precinct are designed to attract talented people and generate more employment opportunities. Limited measures to reduce crime are outlined in the Accessible City section of the Plan. Security will be provided for merely through good design principles such as active shop frontage, natural surveillance and tactful lighting. A sense of security in the wake of the earthquakes is also an important provision for the people of Christchurch. Restricted building heights and increased building standards provide some assurance for inner city residents. This element of liveability is fairly well represented across Melbourne, Vancouver and Christchurch, with security considerations the only potential shortcoming apparent in the Christchurch Central Recovery Plan.

In terms of equality, the Plan acknowledges the distribution of the benefits of development across society. Basic amenities, a variety of housing, pocket parks, and public transport routes are all to be dispersed across the neighbourhoods of the inner city. Conversely, the distributions of the costs of development are not expressly given. Streetscape detractors due to increased infrastructure requirements, noise pollution, and light pollution affect liveability and require equal consideration. The Plan gives extensive direction to the physical accessibility of the city but provisions relating to social accessibility are non-existent. The accessibility of facilities and services for minority social

and cultural groups needs to be supported in order to make the city liveable for a diverse population. Melbourne and Vancouver both actively support multicultural and diverse communities, with Vancouver assisting different groups to build networks and develop cross-cultural understanding.

As previously highlighted, strategic planning for equality in urban development tends to focus on the accessibility of jobs and the affordability of housing. This notion is prevalent in the Plan with the affordability of housing and residential considerations in general constituting the bulk of the 'Liveable City' chapter. While liveability considerations spanning a broader focus than merely residential provisions can be drawn from other chapters, it is somewhat disconcerting that only residential development has been planned from a liveability perspective. The provision of a range of housing, work, transport and lifestyle choices, although necessary for equality, does not equate to providing options for everyone. Some housing, facilities and spaces need to be designed for residents with a certain status. An example that we can draw upon from the case studies is Vancouver's supportive housing for the previously homeless with community integration and independent living assistance. The provision of disability-specific information on signage was one of the few features outlined that would be sympathetic to unique circumstances.

Fostering sense of place through the preservation of cultural and biological heritage is substantially planned for across a number of chapters. The rebuild will reflect Christchurch's locally distinctive identity by building around the "historical contrast between the curving river and the linear grid of the streets" (CERA, 2012), expressing the city's distinctive urban form. The Christchurch City Council and CERA are collaborating with Ngai Tahu to provide a Maori perspective on how to retain the connectedness to our history and environment, and tangata whenua's relationship with the land. The inclusion of cultural markers, artworks and design features in the city's streetscape will reflect Maori heritage. However, New Zealand has a diverse ethnic mix of indigenous Maori, Europeans, Pacific Islanders and Asians, that should be celebrated and is currently not reflected in the Plan.

The role of the natural environment in an urban setting is recognised and recreation of these natural networks throughout the inner city is provided for. The majority of these larger open spaces are on the periphery of the core, the frame for example, but smaller green spaces, pocket parks and court yards are being implemented throughout the city to retain connectedness to the environment. The connectivity of these green networks should be considered in terms of pedestrians, cyclists and wildlife. Some habitat restoration surrounding waterways is promised but the movement of wildlife through urban areas requires a higher level of connectivity than the current anthropocentric design.

Governance is the element of liveability least apparent in the Plan. The limited period for which resident input was considered through campaigns such as “Share an Idea” was not adequate when the sheer expanse of planning that was required to develop this Plan is taken into account. It is in the best interests of all the stakeholders if those affected by the development are involved throughout the planning. The Council and CERA are collaborating with Ngai Tahu for guidance on producing outcomes that work for Maori, although the nature of this collaboration is not qualified in the Plan. Formation of the Plan itself provides the community with a sense of direction for the rebuild. However priorities and trade-offs are not made explicit in the content. The presentation of the Plan is erring toward a sales pitch with only the positive elements being conveyed.

The Plan does foster individual capability as it provides for the development of human potential, including skills, creativity and personal values. The Plan does invest in people but to what extent? A number of transitional projects in the earliest stages of the rebuild provided a creative outlet for community members to get involved following the earthquakes. Precincts dedicated to the arts and creative industries, health education, research and innovation, and sporting endeavours will increase individual capability and foster these attributes in the next generation. Collaborating with innovative businesses and research institutes, while drawing on knowledge from local universities will see progress across the city’s population. Vancouver fosters creative individuals by creating residency programmes and providing subsidies and grants. While the Plan outlines a

number of projects to incorporate art and sculpture into public spaces, often support is required to make remaining in or moving to the inner city feasible for these individuals.

The Plan encourages individual capability by giving precedence to walking, cycling and shared transport and enabling residents to be more active. Actions to draw private vehicles away from the central core, create better infrastructure for cyclists and restrict some streets to pedestrian use only are to be incorporated into the rebuild. Further strategies to promote an active inner city lifestyle could be to diversify the range of public and shared transport available. A public bike share system would be achievable with Christchurch's wide, flat streets and the improvements to walkways and cycle-lanes already provided for. In order to increase individual capacity for a diverse population, areas need to provide a setting for a variety of life stages (Bramley et al, 2006). While the average-aged, able-bodied adult will be well catered to following the rebuild, provisions for children were less apparent and provisions for the elderly were scant.

Social capital, the provision for conviviality, interaction, and cumulative action, is provided for through the rebuild but, as with individual capability, it is a question of "to what extent"? Establishing support between related businesses and individuals, such as local government facilitating co-ordination, and co-operation within research institutes, creative industries and artistic talent, induces greater outcomes for those sectors. The opportunity to create greater ties within the community is a positive outcome of increased density and spontaneous interaction. Provisions for vitality of the urban environment such as Christchurch's orientation away from car travel, retail opportunities and entertainment staged in public spaces encourages face-to-face interaction and fosters a sense of community. The development of community and religious facilities, vital for achieving community goals, wasn't given much recognition in the Plan. Participation in community activities at these facilities help to empower custodianship, the sense of responsibility and ownership that residents need to care for the shared spaces.

Further considerations that should be taken into account from the Christchurch Central Recovery Plan are the lack of information provided on how these provisions are going to

manifest themselves. The Plan makes bold statements such as central government's commitment to "working in partnership with local government, iwi, businesses, investors, non-governmental organisations and the community to realise the vision set out in this Plan" (CERA, 2012), cannot carry much weight without specificity. The documents outline use of implementation and monitoring plans, and design guidelines but overviews of the governance provisions, if any have been developed, are notably absent. Accompanying all aspects of the rebuild is the statement that it will be integrated with the character of the area with no indication of how this will materialise. There is a raft of basic urban design provisions for inducing change in the city, for example providing guidelines for the orientation and height limits of buildings surrounding the Square in order to make the Square a "year-round space". While urban design can afford these changes, a shift in the city's culture is required to induce lasting change (Davison, 2011).

#### **5.4.1. Participatory & Debate-Centred**

Perhaps the strongest lesson Christchurch can take from the case studies is the potential participatory and debate-centred governing has to bring about change. The Collingwood Village case study was "seen as coming from the community rather than being done to the community" (Davison, 2011) as community members were so extensively involved in the design and development. The consultation process fostered a sense of community ownership as their decisions shaped the process of change. Without thorough consultation processes, planners would be looking to the built form to retain sense of place rather than the social and experiential meanings of neighbourhood character. The process promoted social capital by including those who previously may not have become engaged and encouraging community interaction overall.

In Australasian cities, socio-experiential constructs are often overlooked in favour of the physical features of the built environment. Lot sizes, coverage, and setbacks do not determine social and experiential meanings of neighbourhood; they merely contribute in enabling these meanings to form (Davison, 2011). Social and experiential meanings can be a root cause in the opposition by residents to higher density development, yet these meanings remain under-acknowledged in modern planning approach (Vallance et al.,

2005; Dovey et al., 2009). Allowing scope for 'inclusionary argumentation' provides for the exploration of a community's social and experiential meaning as consensual understanding is not a presumption (Punter, 2003; Healey, 2010). Perception of place and its value are subjective. Different stakeholders should engage in debate in order for these perceptions to be established and taken into account during planning.

This begs the question of whether we are mistaking outcomes and causes. Perhaps effective governance is the instrument by which Christchurch should seek to obtain liveability rather than intervening at the urban design level. Planning for vibrancy of place and social inclusion, etc, is not necessarily required of local government under the Local Government Act. Potentially the Council could move in the direction of liveability by enabling democratic decision-making and action. This idea is certainly aligned with the thinking of Neuman's compact city fallacy where he "conceiving the city in terms of form is neither nor sufficient to achieve the goals ascribed to the compact city" (2005). Fostering sense of place, necessary for achieving liveability, requires a place-based approach to urban planning. However, as found through the case studies, urban form across these liveable cities is consistent, irrespective of context. Therefore, urban planning may be more productive through place-based governance shaped by participation and debate (Neuman, 2005).

## **6. Conclusions**

The Christchurch Central Recovery Plan is a wide-reaching document which is closely aligned with international approaches to promoting liveability in the inner city. Conventional urban planning discourse prescribes a compact, high density, mixed use, pedestrian centred, vibrant urban form with the provision of green space. When reflecting on the Melbourne and Vancouver case studies there are a number of these characteristics the Plan has not provided for. Direction to increase security, provide for social accessibility, incorporate multi-culturalism, provide support for creative individuals, diversify public transport, and develop community centres and religious facilities should be strengthened. While this document has great breadth, there is a lack of content

outlining how these provisions will manifest themselves, priorities and trade-offs , and the participation and consultation involved.

The fact that the model of the liveable city is consistent and well known yet largely unattained, throws into question the feasibility of implementation. The Collingwood case study demonstrates the effectiveness of a participatory and debate-centred planning process in achieving a compact urban form. Focussing on effective governance and planning process affords liveability in the inner city, without having to plan specifically for it.

### **6.1. Limitations and Implications for Further Research**

Given more time, the feasibility and cost of each of the recommendations made to the council could be explored. Strategies to implement these initiatives could be developed further to establish their workability. Furthermore, the desirability of the compact city characteristics could be established. The urban form the study is aiming to foster is based on a number of assumptions, for example, that all residents want vibrancy and interaction. The provision for some isolation in a higher density, inner city environment can be just as important. A deeper look into how the rebuild would allow residents some seclusion while pushing for higher levels of interaction would be an option for further research.

Christchurch City Council may consider the transparency of governance surrounding the rebuild planning process. If moving toward participatory and debate-centred planning is not a direction the Council wants to take, then a clarification of the planning surrounding the implementation of those actions is a reasonable step. The planning process appears to be fragmented, investigating the benefits of wider collaboration within the departments of local and central government could lead to more holistic outcomes. Given the opportunity I would reflect on the findings of this research further into the rebuild, when perhaps those trade-offs are becoming more apparent.



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